

# Dragon Newsletter

*July, 2006 Edition*



Dear Dragon Families and Friends,

Hello again from Camp Taji. Another month has passed and we are into the fourth quarter of our rotation. July was another eventful month with a bunch of promotions and a visit from the Sergeant Major of the Army. This has also been our busiest month for operations and maintenance, so know that if the phone calls were down a bit it was due to work tempo and certainly not desire.

On Independence Day, Echo Company hosted a good old fashioned barbeque, but with the OP-TEMPO the way it is, the attendees were all pretty much from Echo Company. They are the only ones that have any consistency to their schedules these days. With their connections in the Dining Facility, they cooked up a delicious barbeque meal that was enjoyed by all. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July also marked the end of the Camp Taji Softball Tournament in which the Echo Company sponsored team "The Havenots" went undefeated, winning over the better of two brigades and civilian contractors. It was our pleasure to present the Brigade Commander, COL MacWillie with the Tournament trophy as a testament to the superior athletic ability of the Aviation Brigade.

July was also an exciting month due to all the promotions that occurred. We promoted four Lieutenants to the rank of Captain, (CPT Clinton Speegle, CPT Jesse Dunn, CPT Joe Seiver, and CPT John Perrone). Their promotions are a direct result of their outstanding

leadership abilities and their total commitment to this unit. These young Captains have bright futures ahead of them and their leadership will be key to the future success of our Army.



LTC Rapavi speaks at 1SG Meyer's appointment to 1SG of HHC

The NCO Corps also had significant promotions. We congratulate newly promoted 1SG Meyer, SSG Leafy, SSG Vassar, SGT Beard, SGT Rodriguez, SGT Witte, and SGT Mundo. Noncommissioned Officers are the backbone of this unit. Without their tireless hard work and development of young Soldiers, we would not be able to accomplish our mission. These NCOs are excellent examples of leadership and dedication for all our junior Soldiers.

As I stated previously, the Sergeant Major of the Army Preston paid Camp Taji a visit this month. Many of our Soldiers had a chance to visit with SMA Preston as he toured the operations of Camp Taji. This was an exciting chance for our Soldiers to see the senior most enlisted member of the United States Army.

As we close out this month it reminds us of how much closer we are to returning home. Remember we are here to preserve our freedom, our Independence, and our way of life.

The sacrifices your Soldiers are making will ensure that Americans can live in peace, and a more stable Iraq certainly makes that more possible.

We couldn't do it without you! Thank you all for your tireless support and love.

**MICHAEL J. RAPAVI**  
**DRAGON 6**



## Alpha Company "Vipers"

Greetings to all in the Viper Family! That time of the month has come again for me to update you on all the happenings here with the Vipers at Camp Taji, Iraq. Not much seems to change here on a daily basis, especially the weather. It continues to be very hot and the only relief comes at about 3 am where it is cool for about an hour. Most of us are still looking for our first cloud in three months. "The long, hard, hot days of summer" is probably the best way to describe the day to day grind for all in the company.

June seemed to fly by for most, especially for those who were on leave! All were happy to see that CW2 Corey Swetz was cleared by the doctors when he was home to return to us here in Iraq. Hopefully with some physical therapy and luck we will have him back to flying soon. SGT Kristopher Woodburn had a relaxing time visiting family and friends in New York. CW2 Dave Harper enjoyed his leave very much but was rather distraught when he returned to his room at Taji only to find that his endless supply of Pepsi that he acquired from the Dining Facility had been secretly replaced by an endless

supply of Coke. It did not take Dave long to find the culprit and have precious Pepsis returned unharmed in a hostage exchange. Most of the Vipers who took leave later in the deployment agree that although it was hard coming back here, taking leave later means that it will not be long until they are back for good with their friends and family. In fact some of the Soldiers who took leave back in January were ready for another break.

SPC Greg Gollnick had the opportunity to take a four-day Freedom Rest Pass in Baghdad. Believe it or not there is actually a really nice set-up for Soldiers to take a break and relax. I doubt Baghdad will become a thriving vacation spot anytime soon, but it is nice to be able to get away for a few days. The Viper Lounge continues to thrive with more and new people coming to take a load off and relax, and if they are so inclined, smoke a cigar (or two!) LTC Rapavi and Chaplain Hernandez can even be seen from time to time sitting with all in the lounge.



CPT Dunn and CPT Seiver are congratulated after their promotion

tunity as a captain to command a company. PFC Christopher Garlick was promoted to Specialist that same day, unbeknownst to him. SPC Garlick's effort and motivation on the flight line have been outstanding during the deployment so the commander and first sergeant decided to put him in for a promotion—and just not tell him. Then on July 1<sup>st</sup> the commander had a company formation and called SPC Garlick to the front and then pinned on his new rank. The look on his face was priceless and well worth the effort that all had to make to keep it a secret from him!



SPC Garlick addresses the Company after his promotion

The start of July also brought some well-deserved promotions to the Vipers. 1LT Jesse Dunn and 1LT Joe Seiver were both promoted to Captain. Both seemed excited and a little dismayed that their time as lieutenants (and thus platoon leaders) were numbered. Ahead of them awaits the dreaded staff jobs, but always the light at the end is getting the oppor-

Well that's about all the news that is fit to print from this side of the world. Please know that all of us miss all of you very much and while you continue to pray for us over here we do the same for you all over there. Let's all hope that time continues to go fast and that everyone stays safe. Until next month.....

CPT Tim Measner

Viper 06



# Bravo Company "Reapers"



## REAPERS

So what happened to the "Raptors?" Well, as some of you know, Bravo Company had been the "Reapers" since the company's founding in the early 1990s. Over those years, the company served with distinction in Bosnia as part of the 1998-1999 Stabilization Force (SFOR) and more recently in 2003-2004 during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF-1). By providing superior attack helicopter support to the ground units in 4ID, the "Reapers" earned themselves a reputation of being courageous professionals who could be counted on when 4ID Soldiers were in a tough fight. Before this deployment, we were directed to change our callsign to something a little less evil-sounding in order to be more culturally sensitive. However, since we only use the battalion callsign during mission off Camp Taji, we have been cleared to reclaim our historical callsign. We are proud to be Reapers again and carry on the company's proud tradition.

The Reapers started the month of July by promoting SPC Gary Witte to Sergeant on July 1<sup>st</sup>. SGT Witte epitomizes the ideals of the quiet professional. Dedicated, hard-

working, and humble, SGT Witte is a rock in the company. He can always be counted on to do the right thing and set the example for others to follow. For these reasons, I have extreme confidence that SGT Witte will be a great asset to the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

July also saw SGT (P) Keister and SPC Morehouse decide to reenlist. It is an exciting time for these soldiers. In addition to his reenlistment, SGT Keister was recently recommended for promotion to Staff Sergeant by the Battalion Promotion Board. SPC Morehouse was recommended for promotion several months ago and his reenlistment guarantees that he will serve the Army as an NCO for years to come. I have nothing but the highest level of admiration that SGT Keister and SPC Morehouse, during times of such hard work and hardship, committed themselves to serving their country. It was my great pleasure to reenlist them.



Sgt Trammell welcoming SPC Chiodo to B Co

Company continues to fly with a high level of discipline and precision. I continue to admire the level of pride that both the pilots and crew-chiefs put into their work. The tougher the workload, the greater the Reapers seems to rise to the challenge. At home, the FRG continues to be a source of great support. In addition to developing Reaper Calendars and other self-promotion items, the FRG is working hard in preparation to support our Soldiers during redeployment. If you want to be part of the FRG's redeployment efforts, please contact our FRG leader, Gerrine Lizama at [gerrine.lizama@us.army.mil](mailto:gerrine.lizama@us.army.mil)

The Countdown is on. Although there is still much hard work to be done, there are less than 100 days left and they are going by quickly. Texas is calling us.

Thank you for your continued support.

CPT Andy Caine  
Reaper 06



CPT Caine re-enlists SPC Morehouse and Sgt Keister

On 10 July, the Reapers added a great young soldier when the Delta Company "Dawgs" sent SPC Christopher Chiodo to Bravo Company to serve as a line-company crew chief. SPC Chiodo joined our team after returning from Environmental Leave and we warmly welcome him and his wife Megan into the Reaper family.

Day in day out, Bravo

# Charlie Company “Sidewinders”



July has been a truly exciting month for the “Sidewinders” of Charlie Company. We started off the month by celebrating our Nation’s birthday on the fourth of July. There were no fireworks, but a lovely meal was made ready for us at the mess halls around Camp Taji; it wasn’t quite home but it helped.

It was also our pleasure to promote two outstanding Soldiers this month, Private First Class Brown was promoted to Specialist and Corporal Beard was promoted to Sergeant. The “Sidewinders” are very proud of these fine Americans, and we know they will only strengthen our ranks.



SGT Serna pins on Specialist Rank on newly promoted SPC Brown



SGT Dorman is about to pin on Sergeant stripes on SGT Beard

As the “Sidewinders” of Company C start to round the corner of this deployment spirits are high. Everyone is very eager to accomplish the mission; they are also excited about seeing their families and friends once again. Your continued support for your troops is greatly appreciated and please know that you are always in our thoughts as well.

CPT MARK A GREENE  
SIDEWINDER 6



# Delta Company "Dawgs"



The sun is hot, the air is dusty, and Delta Company continues to provide top-notch maintenance services to the battalion. Captain James has escaped the 110 degree temperatures for a few weeks of Rest and Relaxation, but I know he will come back as proud as ever of our Dawgs' effort in fixing every imaginable thing from sheet metal to turbine engines. Although only a Dawg myself for a few months, I must say that the professionalism and dedication that our Soldiers demonstrate day in and day out has impressed me and proves to be second-to-none in the Combat Aviation Brigade. Maintenance platoon, in addition to handling numerous unscheduled maintenance tasks, continues to turn out 250-Hour Inspections in almost 6 days less than Army standard. Armament works non-stop troubleshooting aircraft and working to install new equipment. Our Shops Platoon never fails to provide the battalion with quality products. Our Tech Supply Soldiers ensure that we always have parts available to repair and replace worn components. SFC Jewell and his Technical Inspectors in the Quality Control office work tirelessly to ensure that all work is done in compliance with aviation standards. Lastly, I have to commend our Production Control office for the job they do managing all 24 aircraft. Their management skills have resulted in zero missions being dropped due to lack of available aircraft.



SSG Leafy has his new rank pinned on during his promotion ceremony

We are proud to welcome seven new Soldiers to the Dawg family. Joining us in the month of July were SSG Kincaid (Shops), SGT Wainwright (QC), and SPC Truffa, PFC Haskins, PFC Bilodeau, PFC Gillis, and PFC Smith (Maintenance). We are excited about this additional combat power and even more excited about the contributions that these Soldiers and their families will make to the company and the FRG. We have also shaken a few things up internally: SSG Vazquez moves from QC to be an Armament maintenance supervisor, SSG Zavala, SGT Bahe, and SGT Chica move to QC to be Technical Inspectors, and SGT Whitley and SGT Maciokas get to get their hands dirty again by moving back to maintenance.

Delta Company says goodbye to three Soldiers this month. SPC Cordiero is now a Alpha Company Viper, SPC Chiodo joins up with the Reapers of Bravo Company and SPC Platt has become a Charlie Company Sidewinder. These three Soldiers will be missed, but I know that the contributions that they will make as crew-chiefs in a line company will undoubtedly make 1-4 ARB stronger than ever.

Congratulations go to our Soldiers that earned promotions this month. SSG Leafy of Armament Platoon continues to excel at his job and we are pleased to see him being rewarded for his effort. The NCOs of Delta Company welcomed SGT Mary Rodriguez of Maintenance Platoon to their professional ranks on July 1<sup>st</sup>. We know that SGT Rodriguez will be an outstanding NCO. Haskins, Gillis, and Smith were promoted to Private First Class, a fact testament to the impact they have made in their short time with the company. It is always a pleasure to see Soldiers that deserve advancement to be promoted and placed in positions of increased responsibility. Congratulations go out to these Soldiers and their families who have played a vital role in supporting them in their professions.

We know we are getting close to coming home to Texas because the baseball All-Star break is over and we are almost done with our Environmental Morale Leave program. Almost every Soldier I speak with talks highly of their time at home and the time they got to spend with their family. I know they are as anxious to get back home to you as you are to get them back. Before you know it we'll be watching the World Series and getting ready for a homecoming. Know in the meantime though that CPT James, 1SG Belle, and I will continue to do our best to ensure the safety and well-being of all the Dawgs. On behalf of CPT James, thanks for everything that you, our family and friends, do for us. Without your support, we would not be the successful team that we have are. The Dawgs are doing exceptional things and will continue to make you proud. Take care and look forward to seeing you all soon.

ATTACK!  
CPT Clinton T. Speegle  
DAWG 05

# Echo Company "Rough Riders"



Dear Roughrider Families and Friends from Roughrider 6,

Well, I'm back from my EML and have to say it was a great break. I was able to see most of my family and talked to a lot of the Soldier's families in the rear. Well summer is in full force and the temperatures are pushing 130 degrees outside, so most of us are staying indoors. Despite this morale is still high, especially now that we have passed the two thirds mark for the deployment. On the sports side of things, the Aviation Brigade "HAVENOTS" (because all the players do not have aviation wings) took the Camp Taji 4<sup>th</sup> of July Softball tournament. This team is made up of seven of our very own Roughriders: CPT Ritch, 1SG Arnett, CW2 Horton, SGT Jones, SGT Mayle, SPC Castaneda, and SPC Ricciardo. The true "ROUGHRIDERS" team will compete in the August league tournament as the # 1 seed going in and expected to win.



PICTURE( TOP (left to right): SGT Mayle (E 1-4), SFC Rios (E 4-4), SPC Riccardo (E 1-4), CW2 Horton (E 1-4), CPT Ritch (E 1-4), SPC Neldon (HHC 4-4), SGT Jones (E 1-4). BOTTOM: SGT Heycoop (HHC 4-4), 1SG Arnett (E 1-4), SGT Rodriguez (D 1-4), SGT Young (252 Trans), CPT Figueroa (E 4-4) and SPC Castaneda (E 1-4)



## “Rough Riders” (cont’d)



With our aircraft flying more than ever, the need for ammunition and fuel rises. That is where the Distribution Platoon steps up and performs at their best. The “Ammo Dogs” issued outstanding numbers of Class V to the aircraft this month. The 89B’s stayed busy by supplying 11,614 flares, 188 2.75in rockets, and 5,987 rounds of 30mm. With the Distro Platoon working hand and hand, we know that ammo serves no purpose if the aircraft cannot launch. This is where the fuel handlers jump in to fulfill needs. The Class III petroleum supply specialist’s pumped over 124,200 gallons of JP-8 during their 24 hour operations for the month of July. That is nearly 3,000 aircraft that have been refueled. This brings the 8 month refuel total to over 1,747,000 gallons of JP-8 pumped. Continue the hard work Distribution Platoon. We will be heading home to our families in no time!

For the past month, the motor pool has been focusing on safety in the sun. As the temperature rises, soldiers are growing tired from the heat. Thanks to our dining facility, they have provided packets of Gatorade for all Soldiers to have available when a burst of energy is needed to battle the heat. The Soldiers are still continuing to do good work maintaining vehicles to top standards. As we grow nearer to re-deployment, SFC Witten is conducting tool box inventories to ensure our soldiers have maintained proper accountability of all assigned tools.

Congratulations on promotions for SPC Green-Peoples, SPC Claridad, SPC Martinez, SPC El Far, SPC Cho, PFC Strickland, and PV2 Sabala; well deserved. We would also like to welcome our new addition to the maintenance team PV2 Dean and his family and PV2 Strickland they’ve both just joined us over here, ready to work and have blended in with our flow of daily duties. The following soldiers will be going to the Soldier of the Month Board later this month: SGT McKitrick, SPC Green-Peoples, SPC Espinosa, and PFC Tieuel. Good luck to you all. Well, until next month have a blessed “Roughrider.

CPT James Ritch  
Roughrider 6



CPT Ritch, 1SG Arnett, and CW2 Horton never miss a good Bar-B-Q. Chief did cook his famous beans, LOOK OUT EVERYONE.

# HHC "Stallions"



## Stallion Family and Friends,

We have experienced yet another very busy month. As the OPTEMPO rises, so does the performance level of these young Soldiers. Another Independence Day has been celebrated as we continue to ensure that America remains independent for years to come. July 4, 1776, we claimed our independence from Britain and Democracy has been the norm for 230 years. The United States is truly a great and diverse nation with dynamic citizens. Americans are able to celebrate with barbecues, picnics and family gatherings because of fine young men and women just like these Stallions. Just know that your Soldiers are continuing this mission in an exceptional manner.

This month we had to bid a fond farewell to our First Sergeant. As mentioned before, 1SG Kenneth Bolden is a 22 year veteran with many deployments under his belt. His wealth of knowledge and experience will be sorely missed within this company. 1SG Bolden has bigger fish to fry and has moved on to the Sergeants Major Academy and has plans on becoming a future Command Sergeant Major.



PFC Sowe, SPC Cabacungan, SPC Danny, and SPC Medina await to be promoted.

We wish 1SG Bolden the best in his future endeavors and will miss him greatly.

With the farewell of one First Sergeant we were also able to welcome our new First Sergeant and family to the command team. Newly promoted 1SG Phillip Meyer is not necessarily new to the unit. He has served as the battalion S3 NCOIC for the past 19 months. He is another senior NCO with a wealth of knowledge and boundless potential. So you can believe that HHC is in more than capable hands to fill the void of our previous First Sergeant. 1SG Meyer is married to SFC Jovana Meyer and has three lovely daughters Djenne, Nadia and Isabella. Welcome to the team 1SG Meyer and family.

Another addition to the unit is SFC Willie Moore who comes to the unit from 3-4 Aviation. SFC Moore is the new S3 NCOIC that will take the place of the newly promoted 1SG Meyer. I first served with SFC Moore in HHC BDE during OIF I, he is one of the hardest working Non-Commissioned Officers that I have served with in this brigade. He will definitely ensure that we won't lose anything in the NCO department with the departure of the First Sergeant and movement of 1SG Meyer. Once again, we would like to welcome SFC Moore, Terri, Jaquan and Miles to the Stallion family.

As of 1 Jul 06, Dameon Vassar is now known as SSG Vassar. He was promoted in a company cere-



SGT Mundo and SSG Vassar address HHC after their promotion

mony at Camp Taji, Iraq. This rotation will make his second in three years. SSG Vassar has been on active duty for seven years and is an OIF I veteran. I first met SSG Vassar three years ago in Iraq. SSG Vassar is a very technically savvy, hardworking individual in a very demanding and important occupational specialty within this battalion. He is a 25U and works in a very dynamic Communications Section (S6). SSG Vassar is originally from Cleveland, Ohio and has two brothers. He is married to Lovette and they have four children: Devante, Sidney, Dameon and Joshua. SSG Vassar plans on a long productive career in the military. Congratulations SSG Vassar.

One of our promising young Stallions has proven himself once again. SGT Mundo was promoted in a company ceremony on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. If you remember a few months ago as SPC Mundo, he won the 1-4 Aviation Soldier of The Month Board. SGT Mundo will only continue to perform in an exceptional manner. This Soldier will only excel as a newly promoted Non-Commissioned Officer. Congratulations SGT Mundo.



## "Stallions" (cont'd)



CPT Needum address HHC during the promotion ceremony

Back in January, I wrote of a bright young NCO by the name of SGT Audet. He was the first Stallion to re-enlist for 2006 and continues his traditions of first for the company. SGT Audet won the 1-4 AVN Non-Commissioned Officer of The Month Board in May. To my knowledge he is the first NCO to make this major accomplishment since I took command. It is with great pleasure that I inform you that he also won the NCO of the Quarter Board for the battalion. Good job SGT Audet, we are truly proud of you and your accomplishments. Keep up the good work.

On 1 July we also promoted PFCs Cabacungan (S3), Medina (Medic), and Danny (Supply) all to the rank of Specialist. SPC Cabacungan is originally from Hawaii and has been on active duty since 2002. His role as a flight operations specialist is very demanding and he is up for the challenge. SPC Medina is a dynamic combat medic originally from Puerto Rico and has been on active duty for two years. SPC Danny, from the Marshall Islands is a hard working supply specialist. Each of these young Soldiers have performed admirably in their respective sections during this high OPTEMPO deployment. I have seen them all grow into seasoned young leaders

within their military occupational specialties. PV2 Sowe (Supply) was also promoted in the same company formation held on Camp Taji. The newly promoted Private First Class hails from Gambia, West Africa and is a true asset for the company. As you can see, like the U.S. this unit is made up of great and diverse Soldiers.

These Stallions love and miss their families. As always it has been my extreme pleasure to share some of their many accomplishments with you back home. Keep these Soldiers in your hearts and minds. Your untiring support is the fuel that keeps them striving for excellence. I am truly proud to be associated with such fine young Americans.

### Stallion Birthdays

SPC Hines  
SSG Washington  
SPC Cabacungan  
CPT Landrith  
SGT Audet

*"The Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself."*

**Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)**

*Posterity: "you will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it."*

**John Quincy Adams (1767-1829)**

### **STALLIONS ATTACK!!**

**CPT Byron  
C. Needum  
Stallion 06**



1SG Meyer, CPT Needum, and 1SG Bolden are passing the guidon during the Change of Responsibility Ceremony

# Dragon Photo Corner



SPC Garlick and SPC Bender showing off their muscles



CPT Dunn, CW2 James, CW2 Sharpe are preparing for their mission



Green Dragon completing another mission



CW2 Albright and CW2 Fuller before take off



SPC Hardin, SPC Tallet, and SPC Boyer are taking a break from work



CPT Teitge discusses his mission plan with CW2 Maust



# Dragon Photo Corner



Our hidden camera catches LTC Rapavi conducting wall to wall counseling on CPT Needum as CSM Morant supervises



CPT Needum and all his First Sergeants, 1SG Bolden, 1SG Meyer, and 1SG Belle



The Specialist rank is pulled off as Mary Rodriguez is promoted to Sergeant



SSG Miller is either laughing at 1SG Belle's speech or napping...not sure which.



CW4 Pflieger works to keep the Dragons flying.



Baghdad Freedom Rest



# Dragon Photo Corner



SSG Rayford hard at work; wait is that solitaire.



SSG Smith at the 4th of July Bar-B-Q



SFC Lopez says "I AM WHERE?????"



PV2 Fowler working hard to fill sandbags that have fallen and broken apart.



SSG Smith and SSG Stokes take time out to get a photo op with the Sergeant Major of the Army.



SPC Murphy, PV2 Roebuck, and SPC Simmons hard at work on night shift.



# Dragon Photo Corner



A Green Dragon flying over Camp Taji



Ghostbusters-no, it the new nitrogen backpack as modeled by Spc Tirado



SPC Gosvener after prayer luncheon



SFC Lizama working on the flight line



CPT Caine and SGT Kennedy pin on Sergeant rank on newly promoted SGT Witte



Sunrise over Camp Taji

# Dragon Photo Corner



CW3 Niemi and CW2 Baise preflight their aircraft



SGT Christy and SPC Haven loading ammo on the AH-64D



SPC Bramblett gives us the thumbs up after breaking his arm



We have no idea what SPC Jernigan is doing, and we can't ask either



CW3 Boren, affectionately know as "Mr. Happy", inspecting the his AH-64D



CPT Measner telling SPC Brown he is good to go



# Dragon Photo Corner



SPC Sneed hiding out



SPC Anderson, SPC Bramblett, and SGT Pritchard pose for the camera



SPC White and SPC Platt performing maintenance



SGT Serna and SGT Castro conducting maintenance on the AH-64D



Echo Company Soldiers conducting PCS on the M1114



1SG Hampton congratulates SGT Saldana on winning the NCO of the Month Board



# Dragon Photo Corner



1SG Hampton congratulates PFC Tieuel on winning the Soldier of the Month Board



SGT Audet, PFC Harris, SGT Hodges, and SPC Burkhalter enjoy a night outside



1SG Meyer and CW4 (P) Farrow enjoy a cigar together in the POD area.



CPT Hanson boozing it up again.....with near beer



SPC Bemis is relaxing and enjoying a cigar



SFC Taylor gives a big smile to the camera





# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Ask almost any Soldier about “home” and almost immediately you'll see their eyes light up. As they share their stories, you may also notice a small hint of heaviness as they reflect on the pains of separation, a true sign that our families are so near our hearts. Clearly, deployments place a strain on the family system, perhaps unlike any other. However, it has also been quite apparent to me during this deployment, that families are the substance that keeps us connected to a greater sense of reality, a purpose if you will. For me personally, warm thoughts flood my heart every time I consider my daughter taking her first steps without my supportive words of encouragement. My face may reveal a temporary glimpse of pain, but this hardly compares with my enduring joyous expression of knowing that I have a little girl who calls for “daddy” on the phone. In this letter, I would like to acknowledge all of you, the readers, the family members, parents, children, and most of all our spouses who continue beside us every step of every day. You are our heroes working beside us, giving us purpose beyond our own. We work long hours and sweat in the Iraqi heat, and above all strive to keep terrorism at bay because of you. Just in case your soldier hasn't recently told you...you're worth every ounce of sacrifice.

Perhaps the most resilient of all those sacrificing for our nation are the spouses at Fort Hood or scattered throughout the U.S. Even in our absence, our spouses continue to be “steadfast and loyal” on the home front. Certainly, I have developed a newfound appreciation towards my spouse, but this profound respect is expressed by many throughout the ranks. I am privileged to hear many stories and gaze upon beautiful family photos of Soldiers in 1-4ARB. With your calls, letters, packages, e-mails, among other forms, you sustain our sanity and provide purpose to our mission as you take care of the children, work, balance the budget, and emotionally survive this deployment. There is a saying in the book of Proverbs that states “like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.” (Prov. 25:25) Such is your support to your soldier in the 1-4ARB and its mission. It is because of your refreshing concern that we do not sacrifice alone, but are reminded daily that we walk through this desert as one.

Blessings,

Chaplain R. Hernandez

Author Unknown

The backbone of the home you see.  
That's what the military wife is to me.  
Guarding the fort while her husband's away,  
Defending and protecting his country each day.  
Though many forget the importance of her role in his life,  
Please, Sir, don't forget the military wife.  
The woman who primarily raises her children alone,  
The one who strives to make a "house", a home.  
The one who sacrifices the time she could share,  
The one who has many responsibilities to bear.  
The woman who is married to a protector of the world,  
The one whose life stays fairly unfurled.  
I say again, kind Sir, don't forget the role  
she plays in his life.  
Yes, dear Sir, the military wife.  
The woman who stands by her husband's side,  
The one who takes life stride by stride.  
The woman who wonders when he's far away,  
The one who prays for his safety  
and sends tender love his way.  
Next time you look into a soldier's eyes,  
Think of the one who stands by his side.  
The one left behind, the encouragement in his life.....  
The woman who's called the MILITARY WIFE.